

Issue Thirty Three/July 2004

Gamefreaks

PLAYSTATION 2

PC

PS ONE

XBOX

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GAMECUBE



DOOMTM 3

ALSO INSIDE

ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE/CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY/SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN
ATHENS 2004/DESERT RATS VS. AFRIKA KORPS/JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING/BESIEGER/FORMULA ONE 04/DRIV3R
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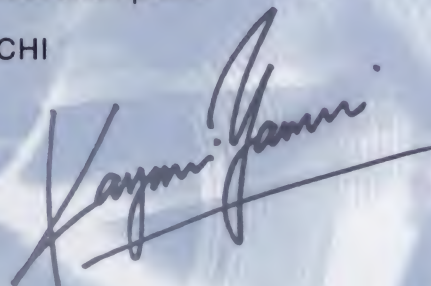
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read me

It's been a decade since the last full installment of Doom, but not much has changed. We still love shooting the crap out of any zombie/alien/demon that we see. Old habits die hard I guess. Doom fans have waited quite long enough, but on August 3 the wait is over. We've got a couple of other sequels this month as well, including the long-awaited Onimusha 3, DRIV3R and the debut of the Syphon Filter series on the PS2. EA have a new online shooter in Joint Operations, there's an Xbox shooter Chronicles of Riddick Escape from Butcher Bay, and more inside...



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HALO 2 GETS A NEW NOVEMBER RELEASE DATE

Microsoft and Bungie push back Halo 2's European release by a couple of days

Microsoft has announced today that the European release of Halo 2 will be November 11th and not the same day as the American release (November 9th) as was previously thought.

"Halo 2 is the hottest game heading to Europe for Christmas and it will be in-stores in UK from 11th November," said Michel Cassius, Senior Director, Xbox Platform and Marketing. "We know people are waiting for it and Halo 2 is everything people expect it to be – a fitting sequel to Halo and the most hotly anticipated title on any platform. With multiplayer online capabilities that expand online gaming to another level, Halo 2 is a significant launch."

Pushing the Xbox hardware to its very limits, Halo 2 will expand on everything that made the original game great, plus add a wealth of technological and gameplay advances. Significantly improved graphics, enhanced AI, an advanced real-time lighting engine and destructible interactive environments are just a small part of Halo 2's evolution of design and technology. Every improvement in Halo 2 will take gameplay to a new level; and in the end, tell a better story.

Utilising Xbox Live to redefine online play, Halo 2 delivers superior multiplayer capabilities. Whether playing with a clan on a new multiplayer map, boarding a friend's Warthog, watching a replay or checking stats, Halo 2 will bring the social experience to a higher level via Xbox Live.



This is one of the more recently released screenshots from Bungie. It shows off some of Halo 2's new, dynamic, team-based multiplayer action

NEW ODDWORLD TITLE FOR 2005

Oddworld Inhabitants sign up with EA to publish upcoming Oddworld



We're expecting to see a lot more wonderful creatures (like this handsome fellow) before next year

EA have officially confirmed they will be publishing Oddworld: Stranger for the Xbox and PS2 with an expected due date in the autumn of 2005. This follows Stranger being dumped by Microsoft as a first party title several months ago.

Developed by Oddworld Inhabitants, Oddworld Stranger features detailed interactive environments set in an enthralling new frontier of the Oddworld universe. Players step into the role of the Stranger, a rough and tumble bounty hunter who tracks down outlaws for moolah. Using a special weapons system that gives a whole new meaning to "live" ammo, players will encounter deviant species and hostile challenges along the way. Oddworld Stranger combines first and third-person gameplay with familiar Oddworld elements and an all-new engine to deliver a unique gameplay experience. Set to award-winning visuals, players will be moved by the complex and inspiring story as the Stranger comes to grips with his true nature in the hunt for the ultimate bounty.

Since its debut, the Oddworld series has become one of the most popular game franchises of all time with nearly five million units sold worldwide.

SAN ANDREAS GATHERING MOMENTUM

Recent rumours have emerged surrounding Rockstar's exclusivity deal with Sony

When we went to print this month, there were just over 100 more sleeps to go until Grand Theft Auto San Andreas is released on the PlayStation 2.

Ever since the public release of the official San Andreas website, many Grand Theft Auto fans have been living by the rule that Xbox consoles wouldn't be getting a taste of San Andreas for at least a year after the PS2 release. It has caught our attention however, that San Andreas may be coming to Xbox shelves sooner. According to some analysts we could be seeing the Xbox version of San Andreas arrive within six months of the PS2 release.

It was assumed by most that it wouldn't come for at least a year after the PS2 version - that's what Sony's exclusivity deal with Rockstar entailed for GTA 3 and GTA: Vice City. The well-known agreement between Take 2 Interactive and Sony took a bit of heat last year with the release of the GTA: Double Pack on the Xbox. We'll keep you posted on all future developments.



NEWS SHORTS

➤ An unhealthy looking financial report and the loss of some big franchises has prompted many to speculate as to how much longer game publisher Acclaim will be around. The company posted a less than inspiring \$56.4 million (US dollars) loss in the past fiscal year ending 31st of March. Add to that the loss of All Star Baseball, Turok, WWF, and Burnout from their game roster and you have a somewhat bleak outlook.

➤ Blizzard Entertainment has announced the delay of the upcoming shooter StarCraft: Ghost. "We are very committed to StarCraft: Ghost as a major part of our lineup," stated Mike Morhaime, Blizzard Entertainment president and co-founder. "As a result, we plan to build additional time into the schedule to polish the game until it meets the high standards that our customers have come to expect from Blizzard products. We are sorry to disappoint players with a delayed launch but are confident that we will deliver a great game with the additional time."

➤ This month Atari has sent word that Driv3r had stormed to the top of the game charts after only four days on sale. Sales of Driv3r have dominated the gaming retail sector, securing the number 1 position on PS2, Xbox and in multiple Australian gaming charts.



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SUDEKI

XBOX ■ MICROSOFT

Apart from Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic (one of last year's best games), Xbox owners have been somewhat starved of quality RPG's. There's certainly nothing in the mold of the Final Fantasy franchise that has done so well on both PlayStation platforms. Sudeki (which apparently means 'gorgeous' in Japanese) looks set to change all that when it releases for the Xbox at the end of this month.

Sudeki promises to be an enormously rich and full-featured RPG, with an epic storyline that follows four heroes (a powerful sorceress, a deadly gunslinger, a beefy swordsman, and a dark huntress) on a twisting path of betrayal and magic.

Sudeki features intense real-time combat with countless combos, slow-motion bullet time, devastating attack spells and ranged weapons, and group-based magical attacks.

With vast worlds to explore and some of the hottest looking heroines ever, this is an RPG not to be missed. Look out for Sudeki on next month's cover.



DJ: DECKS & FX

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

DJ lets PS2 owners mix their own tunes (there are around 50 tracks from Paul Oakenfold, Pete Tong, 'Dangerous' Dave Pearce and others) without having to splash out on a pair of decks, a quality mixer, amp, speakers, headphones, a vast selection of vinyl and a smoke machine (optional).



JACKIE CHAN ADVENTURES

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ SCEI

The game has a cel-shaded look that recreates the cartoon series. Jackie plays an artifact expert defending the world from ancient Chinese demons, and a group of ninjas known as the Dark Hand.



VIETCONG PURPLE HAZE

PS2/XBOX ■ GOD GAMES

This popular PC title is being ported. Purple Haze includes the original game and the expansion pack, Fist Alpha. There are 20 single-player missions, 20 weapons and online play as the US or Vietcong.



CATWOMAN

PS2/XBOX/PC ■ EA GAMES

The game and the movie cover the same ground, story-wise. Catwoman offers 23 levels of punching, kicking, whipping, and 'Hello Kitty' acrobatics. The movement feels similar to Prince of Persia, but the combat system is more like Rise to Honour. Listen out for the purrrfect voice-work of Halle Berry.



JUICED

XBOX ■ ACCLAIM

Customisation is the name of the game in Juiced, an upcoming racer that offers thousands of Fast and the Furious-like modding combinations that let players create their ultimate Nitrous-burning street machines.



URU MYST: THE COMPLETE CHRONICLES

PC ■ UBISOFT

Uru: Ages Beyond Myst was included in TIME Magazine's top ten games last year. Complete Chronicles, includes Ages Beyond Myst, Uru: To D'ni (the first expansion pack), and new add-on The Path of the Shell.

DOOM 3

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
First person shooting

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players/Online

AVAILABLE:
Early August

WEBSITE:
www.doom3.com



With a wave of new FPS titles bottlenecking towards the end of this year, a handful are emerging as likely favourites. Fans waiting patiently for Half-Life 2 will be relieved to hear that it's near completion; its release has been marred by delays and the theft of some early game code from the Valve Software's studio. Other high profile PC shooters scheduled for release in 2004 include THQ's S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl, as well as a trio of WWII inspired titles -- Brothers in Arms, Medal of Honor Pacific Assault and an add-on for Call of Duty.

On the consoles, Halo 2 has been the most talked about sequel of all time; Microsoft and Bungie have set the worldwide release date for November 9. Not to be outdone, Sony are adding the final polish to Kill Zone, a FPS title that wowed crowds at this year's E3, and looks set to finally provide a massive PlayStation 2 audience with a top quality shooter. Last but not least on our short list is Doom 3, the latest in Id Software's classic series.

A decade has passed since Doom II. With the first two games and numerous add-ons and spin-offs the series has evolved into a 230 million dollar brand, but numerous postponements and false alarms have understandably left Doom aficionados feeling a bit gun-shy when it comes to news of this third title. Allow Gamefreaks to calm your concerns. In fact, don't make any plans for early August; this is the rumoured release period for Doom 3 on the PC (with an Xbox version promised in a few months).

Built using Id Software's revolutionary new 3D engine, Doom 3 looks destined to deliver one of the most



Id Software wanted to design a game engine that could deliver the most intensely realistic and visually stunning shooter ever created

gripping and frightening gaming experiences ever, but unlike previous titles in the series, this newest incarnation focuses on creating the ultimate single player FPS experience.

The PC installment didn't appear at this year's E3, but the highly touted Xbox version was there (playable) which kept the Activision stand packed out and did plenty to whet the appetite. The PC installment hasn't exactly been hidden away. Doom 3 has made appearances at various international shows, including last year's QuakeCon, where it made a promising multiplayer debut by demonstrating some hard-fought four-player death matches.

The story is set in the year 2145; there has been some trouble reported at one of the Union Aerospace Corporation (UAC) bases on a Martian moon. Players take on the role of a marine dispatched to investigate. Once you arrive, you'll begin

to see signs that something has gone very wrong. Blood splattered about the facility offers a chillingly clue as to the fate of the prior occupants. It seems an experiment has gone awry, opening a portal to hell and unleashing an army of ghouls.

The game takes place in and around the UAC base. With its shiny metallic walls and shady surfaces, the setting is not too unlike the set used for James Cameron's 'Aliens' film, though Doom 3 can quickly provide a more nightmarish backdrop. Some of the levels have been warped by dimensional portals, so players will find themselves walking through an industrial conduit only to have it suddenly distort into a bright red hallway to Hell. These dimensional shifts also introduce vile new demons into your environment. You will sometimes be able to hear and even feel them coming like an approaching train.

Graphically, the level of detail in



Doom 3 has been classified R16 by the Office of Film and Literature Classification. Noting that the game "contains horror scenes and violence"



Doom 3 is insane. Remember those screen shots that you gawped at online while you were reading up on Doom 3, the ones that looked almost far-fetched? Well, guess what? They're real alright, and they will look even better moving around.

An action game, primarily, Doom 3 has also been designed to scare the absolute crap out of you. The terrifying cast of creatures will have you persistently on edge and the abundant darkness can cause the imagination to run wild. The swarms of zombies are surprisingly tough to kill, taking a couple of shotgun blasts each, or several short bursts with a machine gun. After you've dealt with them, you'll face corrupted marines armed with shotguns, flaming skulls (these are looking a little scarier these days), and a frighteningly fast, four-legged crawling creature that will tear you in twain if you don't destroy it promptly.

You're going to need some serious hardware to take on the hordes from

hell. Weapons in Doom 3 will include a standard pistol, a shotgun, machine gun, plasma rifle, rocket launcher, and good old-fashioned fists. Nothing too fancy there, oh, there's also a chainsaw and a flashlight to illuminate shadowy corners - and there are plenty of shadowy corners. Players will be equipped with a personal PDA to provide mission updates and even e-mail access so you can quickly check your hotmail in between battling monsters.

Doom 3 will obviously control incredibly well. Id Software has years of experience producing the Doom and Quake titles and they know how to deliver a superior game feel.

Doom 3 will also allow players to grab a power-up that doubles speed, damage and makes a punch an instant kill; particularly useful in multiplayer. The coolest one is 'Berserk.' It's like the worst acid trip in history, but it only lasts around a minute. The screen twists and warps and a genuinely disturbing howl can be heard

the entire time. Players will literally feel like they are possessed by a demon. Nearby players can hear this happening too, so they know you're going ape and are best avoided.

With the game still a few weeks away from release, Gamefreaks was unable to secure official final specs; however, it appears that FPS fans with older machines (within reason) will still be able to play Doom 3. Id Software CEO Todd Hollenhead hinted that the game will run smoothly on a 1GHz machine with 256MB of RAM and a GeForce 2 or an equivalent card. Taking into account the extraordinary visuals and physics, his estimate seems reasonable.

When it releases early next month, Doom 3 is sure to get under your skin; the escalating level of fear and gore is very much in line with previous Doom titles, but now with a darker pretext and a new cast of nightmare inducing fiends. It's been a long wait, but it's difficult to imagine devotees being disappointed, and nor will a whole new generation of FPS fans looking to experience the evolution of series that started it all.



Doom 3 comes packed with features, including 6-channel surround-sound, and real-time dynamic lighting and shadows



Released '93, Doom became a phenomenon in PC gaming history. Since its inception, the franchise has been one of the industry's best-selling series

ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
3D Action

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
July 23

WEBSITE:
www.capcom.com



If games were real (and let's face it, we've all wished they were at some point in our lives), we'd be laughing long and hard at the good guys from the Onimusha series. Even after all the killing from the last two Onimusha titles Nobunaga still hasn't been defeated and he's back again in Onimusha 3 to raise some hell. Not that it bothers us, mind you, since we get to play another title in this phenomenal series, and it looks like it's the best one yet.

Unlike the previous games, Onimusha 3 is set both in feudal Japan and in modern France, and joining noble samurai Samanosuke is Jacques, played by a very gruff virtual representation of Jean Reno, who you might know from The Professional, or more likely as the dude in Mission Impossible who held up the rope while Ethan Hunt was suspended in



Samosuke uses a new two-sword style. Weapons not only differ in shape, size, and speed, but they also have a special power within them



A time portal sends our hero Samanosuke into the future. Players can then switch control from Samanosuke to Jacques (Reno), in modern day Paris

the white room trying to steal the... well, you know how it goes.

As we already mentioned there's a bit of a twist in the usual plot which sees Samanosuke suddenly transported from medieval Japan to Paris, 2004, where he meets up with Jacques, and together they whup some demonic ass. Along the way they gain the power of the Oni, which is sort of like a huge powerful glove of doom, get helped out by a little time-travelling fairy named Ako. Jacques also gets in his fair share of time travelling too, which is nice for him, and this pretty much sets the plot -- together you'll be trying to figure out a way of getting each other back to your own era.

Onimusha has always been as much about puzzles as it has been about zombie-death, and the time-travel hoo-haa adds much in the way of mind bending; items will need to be transported back and forth to solve problems and there's even a cool bit where you're both in the same place separated by hundreds of years and

are able to help each other out by using your faithful fairy Ako.

One huge difference between this and other Onimusha titles is that finally the 2d backgrounds have been done away with in favour of real-time 3d. While the 2d graphics of times past looked fantastic, the added freedom that comes with 3d makes the game just that little bit better in our opinion. We're not talking much of a difference in graphical richness either; this is one slick, beautiful looking game with gorgeous special effects and we're happy to say the smoothness of the game play of the earlier games has been retained. The character models are great looking too -- Jean Reno really looks like Jean Reno and the bad guys just look plain mean. While we're talking about looks, we should probably mention the cut-scenes, which are absolutely stunning and well worth the time it takes to get through them. The opening sequence alone is one of the best CG we've ever seen.

It's not just the graphics that have



gone 3d either. The old-school Resident Evil type digital control settings have been shoved aside to make room for a far more natural feeling analogue-style control scheme. As with all third-person games there can be some camera problems but it's nothing you haven't already cursed at before -- it's a shame nobody seems to be able to get this right. All gripes aside however the control scheme is a definite improvement, allowing for a button-mash approach if desired but also giving you the option to play with more skills and rewarding your efforts with some pretty cool combos.

The combat is a lot of fun. You will often find yourself fighting the same types of enemies over and over again, but thanks to some very satisfying

kill sequences and different critical hits based on your timing and ability you will definitely not get bored -- Jacques has this cool whip, shoot, strangle, throw type move that just doesn't stop being fun to pull off. You're always finding better weapons to use too which, lets face it, never gets tired.

The puzzles add a nice extra dimension and a bit of light relief from the hack & slash, and while some of them can be a challenge we're pretty sure you'll be able to nut them out without too much difficulty. The linear nature of the game means you're never really able to get too lost. Another rather nice feature is if you get too frustrated and end up dying too often an optional easy mode is unlocked and made available. Finish the game and you can also play it through on hard, as well as unlocking extra outfits and mini games.

Something to keep in mind when you start this baby up: the low-level violence setting is the default so unless you want to miss out on a lot of the gore and red blood, choose wisely as you can only change the settings when you begin a new game.

The audio too has been beautifully cared for, with plenty of time and effort being spent on making the bad guys' death throes just that little bit nastier than usual. The voice acting, although nothing special, is at least not unbearable, and the musical score moves flawlessly from European to Japanese and is very pleasing to the ear.

Overall Onimusha 3 is an extremely good game, one that offers a lot of depth in both story line and game play with enormously high production quality. The decision to move from flat controls to a more 3-dimensional approach is one we all should be happy with and if there's one other thing to say it's that Jean Reno is really entertaining, even when he's only represented by pixels. We heartily recommend you go out and buy this game.



Boss battles are tough, but after a little observation, you can see the pattern they follow. Most of the time, the battles are one-on-one with the exception of Gildenstein. He calls upon other enemies to do the fighting for him



CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
First person shooter

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.riddickgame.com/us/



Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay arrives on a system that is already home to an assortment of quality shooters. It was created by a relatively unknown developer (Starbreeze Studios) and the game is based on a film that has been widely panned by critics.

Yet somehow, despite its evident underdog status, there has been a buzz surrounding this title that has only gotten louder since E3.

Chronicles of Riddick is based on the film of the same name, which predates the cult hit 'Pitch Black', and introduces fans to an earlier model of Vin Diesel's hard-wearing antihero Richard B. Riddick. Naturally enough, you play Riddick, guiding him as he attempts to escape from a triple

maximum security prison.

Visually we were floored by this game. From the real-time lighting and textured surfaces to the smooth animations, Chronicles of Riddick is a technical masterpiece. The game uses 'normal mapping,' the same technique used in Halo 2 and Far Cry. This allows the developers to use relatively low polygon count models that look way better than they should; the result is that every character in the game looks and acts like an actual person. Every character, even the most insignificant, has their own dialogue and voice talent, which sounds better than the acting in most Vin Diesel movies by the way.

As you'd expect, life in triple max is no walk in the park; your character is constantly drawn into fights with other inmates and guards. Fortunately there are save points and med



GameSpot gave this game a score of 9.3 and called it "the most inspiring collaboration between Hollywood and the gaming industry yet"

boosts scattered throughout the 30 levels. The weapons are initially little more than makeshift blades, pipes, clubs and the occasional handgun, although eventually you'll find 15 weapons.

While fundamentally a FPS title, the view changes from time to time. Near the beginning, as you make your way through Butcher Bay, you will have to go hand-over-hand across an overhead railing. The game switches to third-person perspective and if a guard or fellow inmate wanders below you can release your grip and

drop down to squish them.

The term 'Halo killer' has been thrown about (much too lightly) and having seen Chronicles of Riddick, we were instantly blown away by it; however, we still believe that the only thing that will kill Halo is Halo 2. Nevertheless, if you're any kind of FPS fan (there are three difficulty settings for players of varying skill levels) and you have an Xbox, you really do need to check out The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay. We think its one of the better games on the system.



The gunplay isn't quite as well-implemented as the fisticuffs. Riddick eventually finds a tranq-gun, a hand-gun, a shotgun, an assault rifle, and a mini-gun



RALLISPORT 2 CHALLENGE 2

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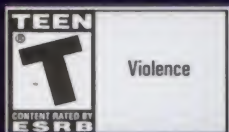
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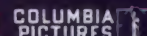
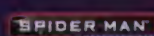
Swing through a living, highly detailed Manhattan.



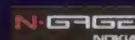
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PlayStation 2



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ATHENS 2004

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Sports

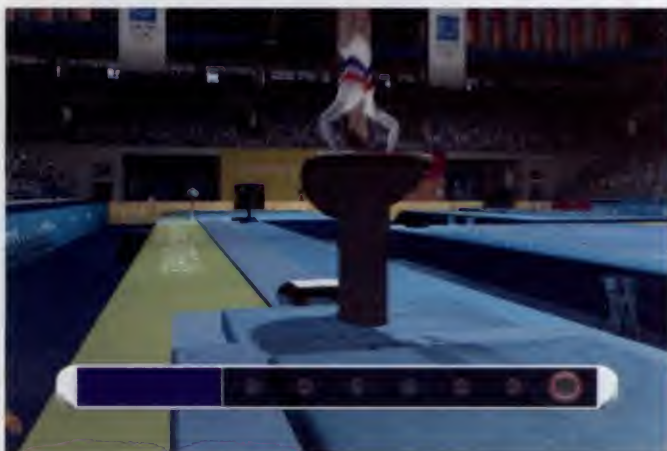
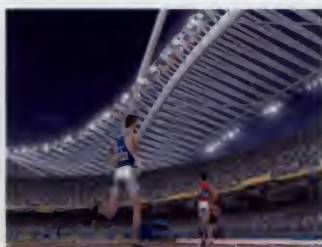
PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
July 30

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz



It doesn't seem so long ago that we had our shirt sleeves pulled down low over our hands as we stood in front of the Track & Field machine outside our local dairy, waiting as our twenty cent coin got closer and closer to being next in line, and when our turn finally came, frantically sweeping our arm back and forth across the buttons to try to get the high score on each of the available events: the 100m dash, Javelin, etc.



Owners of a dance mat can play in the "Party" mode, where you use the mat to control your on-screen athletes. This works best in the gymnastic events

In fact Olympic arcade games have been the source of many of our frustrations since video games became popular and with Athens 2004 it looks like our poor wrists and thumbs are going to be getting yet another bashing. Yes that's right it's Olympics time, and that means another sports title based on the maltreatment of our controllers, except this time, well, it's really quite fun.

This time round Sony have obtained the official license and they've really gone to town with getting it looking right, with the commentary spot-on and the Olympic mascot emblazoned over everything from the in-game titles to the banners displayed around the stadiums. A lot of effort has gone into motion capturing our athletes to make them look like the real thing and the stadiums have been painstakingly modelled right down to the very last plastic chair. Except in this Athens, everything has been built on time.

As we've already mentioned, the button mashing technique is one that has withstood the tests of time, being the standard way our skills are tested every time one of these sports titles graces our television screens and it's no different with Athens 2004; he with the fastest twitch and unhumanlike ability to withstand pain will be the winner on the day. While this technique may hurt a lot, it does mean that pretty much anyone can sit down and play without any kind of formal training which makes Athens 2004 perfect for multiplayer



There's nothing more fun than getting your buddies to sit down and hammer those buttons to see who really is the big daddy of the 100 metres

play - get a bunch of friends around and you'll all be trying to beat each others' time.

The fact that it is so much fun to play with friends makes up for the sorry fact that playing it on your own is less so; the world records are a bit too easy to beat and you'll find you've finished it off pretty quickly.

There are 25 events available for either practice or competition, across a wide variety of disciplines: Athletics, Swimming, Shooting, Archery, Weightlifting, Equestrian and Gymnastics are all there for the competing in. You can either take these events on one by one or take on all 25 in one huge mammoth carpal tunnel

syndrome inducing session.

While the graphics aren't hugely special, they are more than adequate and also well accompanied by the audio; the commentary as we mentioned is quite well done and it's quite fun hearing their negative comments on your early attempts to sort out your timing and get your button mashing techniques down-pat.



Sure you won't be playing Athens 2004 for years to come but we guarantee you will have fun with your mates for at least a few months -- and it's great that even after gaming has come so far we are still using techniques that stretch back to the very early days.

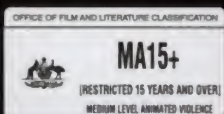
RED • DEAD REVOLVER



COMING
AUTUMN 2004



 WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREVOLVER 



PlayStation 2



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SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
3D Action

PLAYERS:
1 Player/4-Player Online

AVAILABLE:
Out now

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz



Despite having to exist in the shadow of Konami's Metal Gear Solid, Sony's Syphon Filter franchise enjoyed good success on the PlayStation. The fourth installment in the series finally debuts on the PlayStation 2 this month.

If you've played any of the games from the previous trilogy you'll know leading man Gabe Logan is a character very much in the mold of Solid Snake (Metal Gear Solid) and Sam Fisher (Splinter Cell). But Syphon Filter's gameplay was quite different in that it featured little or no stealth, no long-drawn-out narrative and just got on with the action. It was rather cruelly dubbed the 'Metal Gear for

people who couldn't read', yet the no nonsense approach struck a chord with PlayStation fans.

In Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain, Gabe actually steps aside, slotting into a more supervisory role. He still stars in one of the levels, but instead players will create their own agent. You can stamp some of your own personality on the character by choosing a gender, skin tone, body type, hair style, plus the all-important choice of attire.

Devaluing a protagonist in an established series can be risky; the best example of this is probably Metal Gear Solid 2, where Konami decided to replace the leathery Solid Snake with the overly emotional, androgynous rookie Raiden. Fans were quite rightly outraged. But Gabe was never a strong personality: the real star of the previous Syphon Filter games was the tight control system and the well paced action, so we doubt his demotion will hurt too much.

Once you've created an agent, you are shown a circular map. There are numerous objectives and 18 missions set all around the globe, divided into primary and secondary missions. All of the primary missions are accessible in single-player or online – for those of you lucky enough to have broadband access and a PS2 Network adapter. The secondary missions are only available for offline play.

The relatively new introduction of online options for local PS2 owners has been somewhat muted, though the number of titles with online capabilities is growing. The game plays just fine as a single player action title, but broadband online play is a major part of Omega Strain, if the option is relevant. The USB headset (included with SOCOM) is supported, but even without one you can still hear the often hilarious chatter.

The varied environments are quite simple, without too much detail. The majority of the polygon count has gone into the characters. The control system feels much like it did in the previous games, easy to learn and smooth. One new feature loaned from Halo is the weapons management system - players can only carry a limited amount of weapons.

With new online play (for up to 4

players simultaneously) as well as the lengthy missions and literally hundreds of objectives, there's enough gameplay here to sink the Queen Mary. Fans of the series should be able to jump right in and find themselves at home.



Players use the L1 or R1 buttons to control is built upon in other



Omega Strain uses a central server to compile stats and provide matchmaking services, but actual games are peer-to-peer (hosted by individuals)



The characters are great to look at, with lots of details and full weapon representation

DESERT RATS VS AFRIKA KORPS

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
Real-time Strategy

PLAYERS:
1-8 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out now

WEBSITE:
www.softprint.co.nz



Desert Rats vs. Afrika Korps is a real time strategy (RTS) game inspired by the North African campaigns fought in the deserts of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia between 1941 and 1943.

You can assume command of either the Allied or the Axis forces in 20 story-based missions, with an extended campaign for either side. There are also multiplayer opportunities via online or LAN, for up to four players.

Desert Rats vs. Afrika Korps can be played in a variety of ways. Story mode offers a Hollywood-like narrative that follows the fortunes of two opposing commanders who were friends before the war. If you can forgive some slightly crappy voice acting, it's a mildly interesting tale. There's even a beautiful femme fatale.

Scenario mode is for replaying levels that you have already saved, finally there is the abovementioned campaign mode.

If you've got a GeForce 3 or better, Desert Rats is a superb looking game. You can reposition the camera to all corners of the battlefield. Zooming in reveals an impressive level of detail in each unit. The barren desert landscapes are brought to life by scattered buildings, fortified bunkers and abandoned, burning tanks that show off excellent flame effects, along with the real-time shadow effects and unpredictable weather.

The developers have chosen to cut base building out of the picture, leaving players to make do with what they have (and can purloin from the enemy).

Desert Rats also features a wonderfully atmospheric 60 minutes soundtrack, composed by Ervin Nagy and BAFTA Award winner Tamas Kreiner.



With a lack of resource management certain RTS fans will be left craving wood to chop or minerals to mine. But scratching around collecting junk is just cutting into precious tank battle time

JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

DETAILS

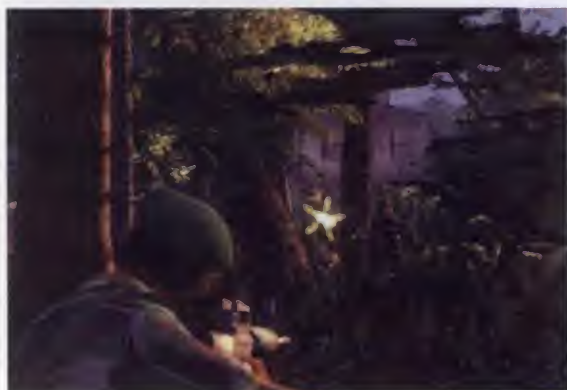
PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
First person shooter

PLAYERS:
1-150 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz



Novalogic's newest creation is Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising, and what a creation it is. Unlike their last shooter Black Hawk Down, Joint Operations is virtually online only, with the exception for a few training missions. This decision isn't going to delight every gamer out there, particularly those without a decent net connection, but it has allowed Novalogic to focus squarely on creating a thrilling online game.

There are five classes available; medic, gunner, sniper, engineer and rifleman, and you can also choose the nationality of your character. 35 different weapons are available, depending on which class you chose.

You can choose your kit including the quantity of such items as grenades and flash bangs, however to add to the realism, weight is a factor which must be considered as excess baggage will slow you down.

The maps included with the game are enormous, and quite varied. For example, you will usually have stark open areas, some dense urban or jungle spots, and usually some high ground.

Most modes generally allow for 150+ players to compete online, while there is also a co-op mode allowing up to 32 human players to take on the computer A.I. and complete designated missions.

There are 29 different combat vehicles, ranging from land, air and sea. Every one of these has support for multiple people, such as gun stands and spare seats.

As in Battlefield Vietnam, the helicopters play a big part, and they're wonderfully easy to control, it is easy to master practically every function after only one or two previous attempts.

DRIV3R

The Driver series was at one time thought of as the only serious rival to Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto empire. With car chases as the theme, it could have easily turned out awful, yet the Driver games somehow captured the spirit of films like 'Vanishing Point' and 'The French Connection' especially with the superbly cinematic replays.

The Driver series was built on hardcore driving sequences set in and around expansive, concrete jungle environments. These remain the highlights of DRIV3R; though taking a leaf from the GTA book players are no longer confined to the car. Tanner is now free to roam around sunny Miami, Istanbul or Nice (on the French Riviera), he can commandeer vehicles (there are over 70) including boats and motorbikes, and he'll have weapons at his disposal.

DRIV3R is being released on all major platforms; Gamefreaks saw both the Xbox and PS2 versions. Predictably, the Xbox version is better looking, featuring impressive lighting and a smoother, less pixelated appearance. The game features voice acting from a cast of Tarantino favourites (Michael Madsen, Ving Rhames) plus there is a fairly decent soundtrack with names like Iggy Pop and Phantom Planet.

The story plays out in 'Undercover', which slowly unravels a lengthy series of missions. At the options menu players can also choose to 'Take a Ride', which lets you jaunt about freely, though it's almost impossible to stay out of trouble for any length of time. Cops are everywhere so if you accidentally bounce a few pedestrians off your bonnet you'll soon find yourself in a white-knuckle chase.

Diehard Driver series fans will lap this game up, and Xbox Live options certainly aren't going to hurt. PlayStation 2 owners will probably look to this as a stopgap until GTA: San Andreas.



DRIV3R isn't supposed to be like Grand Theft Auto, The Getaway, or True Crime. It's designed more to resemble a Hollywood car chase movie

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/Xbox

GENRE:
Driving

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.atari.com



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FORMULA ONE 04

DETAILS

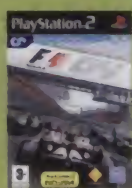
PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Racing

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players/Online

AVAILABLE:
July 23

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz



With a certain speedy German seemingly unwilling to share the top podium this year, F1 fans will have to find other ways to get their thrills. One alternative for PS2 owners is Formula One 04, the first F1 game to launch since Sony secured the exclusive FIA license that was previously held by EA.

Developed by Sony's Studio Liverpool, Formula One 04 brings the tension and glamour of Formula One to life on PlayStation 2 through a variety of gameplay modes. Four levels of difficulty ensure that the game is challenging to the most hard-core gamer, yet accessible to Formula One fans new to the videogame experience.

The use of the full 2004 license means a full roster of teams with all the latest drivers and cars available. Likewise, the full complement of 18 circuits is included. Historic F1 venues such as Monte Carlo and Monza are joined by exciting new circuits in Bahrain and China.

A full Career mode lets aspiring drivers experience the challenge of progressing through several Championship seasons. Creating a profile and beginning at the bottom of the grid, success on the track will attract the interest of more successful teams, while a poor performance may result in being sacked altogether.

Formula One 04 is not going to win any awards for originality, but with the strength of the 2004 license, the fine-tuned gameplay improvements and those first early steps into the world of online console Grand Prix action, F1 enthusiasts are unlikely to be disappointed.



Sony's new license means they can include all 18 races across 4 continents and 16 countries and 10 official F1 teams



Dreamcatcher's latest fantasy RTS Besieger borrows from the mythos of Robert E. Howard's Conan stories

BESIEGER

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
Strategy

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
July 30

WEBSITE:
www.softprint.co.nz



From Dreamcatcher Games comes Besieger, a 3D real-time strategy game that casts you in epic-scale battles, with control over tons of units.

Besieger is set in the ancient land of Tark, flourishing under the rule of its king Konin. But while away on a quest, his evil sister, the sorceress Mara, uses her magic to take over the capital city Cimmeria and claim the throne. Viking warrior Earl Barmalay is sent to lead an invasion. But before he can reach the city, his airship is shot down, leaving him stranded in the Cimmerian forests. Players must guide Barmalay, Konin and all their remaining forces to take back their conquered lands from Mara.

Besieger consists of a single-player campaign, with over 20 missions following the exploits of the Viking Barmalay and Konin. There's a skirmish mode against the computer and multiplayer matches over a LAN or the Internet. In skirmish mode, players can fight battles against up to eight computer opponents on eight different maps. Skirmishes include Deathmatch, and Artifact, which is just 'Capture the Flag', featuring a relic that must be returned to your base.

Some non-traditional RTS departures include Siege, where one player attacks another inside a pre-built castle with walls and battlements, and Battle, which has players squaring off against each other with a set number of troops.

Besieger presents a world filled with Ogres, Werewolves, Centaurs, and other non-human races, a world in which players can wage war as either Viking or Cimmerian warriors.

At the end of the day, Besieger is going to appeal to RTS fans looking for something to distract them from Warcraft 3.

POKÉMON COLOSSEUM

DETAILS

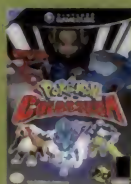
PLATFORM:
Gamecube

GENRE:
Pokemon

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.nintendo.com



Ok, so they've gone and spelt 'Coliseum' wrong, but this is Nintendo we're talking about here and they can do whatever the hell they want.

When it comes to the Pokémon franchise, Game Boy owners have had it all over their console owning cousins. The Game Boy has seen three full episodes in the Pokémon series. On the other hand, console owners have had to make do with 3D battling, and some 'up close and personal' time with Pikachu. Pokémon Colosseum is an attempt to remedy this imbalance by giving Cube owners a true Pokémon experience, in gorgeous 3D.

The gameplay of Colosseum differs from the typical stories. For one, instead of starting out as a newbie, you take control of an experienced trainer. Second, you won't find random battles with wild, roaming Pokémon. Instead, you'll have to essentially steal Shadow Pokémon from other trainers. A rival team is creating them by using a method to damage the hearts of Pokémon in order to make them more formidable. You set out, with the help of a friend, to stop them and unlock the hearts of these maltreated Pokémon.

For fans of the Nintendo 64 Stadium games, Nintendo included a Battle Mode where you can also face up to three human opponents, provided they have a GBA each, a copy of either Ruby or Sapphire and a link cable.



TT SUPERBIKES



TT Superbikes will also have several multiplayer options including two-player split screen and a sidecar mode

Quality racers of the two-wheel variety are in short supply. Game developers often struggle to recreate the delicate handling physics of a bike.

This newest contender gives race fans the chance to compete in the most famous two-wheel race in the world, experiencing all the high speeds thrills and danger of the perilous 37.7 mile Isle of Man TT course.

Developers Jester Interactive have recreated it using the latest surveying technology, which has allowed them to accurately reconstruct all 264 bends, all the gradient changes, key buildings and landmarks.

TT Superbikes features over 50 bikes, from 125cc class right up to the massively powerful 1000cc Superbikes. All the leading manufacturers (Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha, Ducati, Triumph and Kawasaki) have provided precise specs and performance statistics which have allowed Jester Interactive to accurately model the true handling characteristics of each individual motorcycle.

Players must work their way through seven Superbike classes and six Championships before they can enter the TT race. There's even a set of Master class tutorials that take the player through every corner.

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Racing

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
July 30

WEBSITE:
www.softprint.co.nz



SHOWDOWN LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/Xbox

GENRE:
Wrestling

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
July 16

WEBSITE:
www.acclaim.com



It's been a big year for wrestling fans, with a swag of new titles flooding the genre. This month sees the release of Showdown: Legends of Wrestling, the third in this series, which features arguably the best lineup of stars in the history of wrestling games, offering more than 70 personalities (past and present). Andre the Giant, Hulk Hogan, Rowdy Roddy Piper, Bret Hart, Ricky Steamboat, and Randy Savage, are just a few of the Hall of Famers.

Naturally there is a lengthy Career mode. Players can design their own character using the clever Create-A-Wrestler option. There is a nice range of customisation ideas, and you can even mess around with existing wrestlers using cloning and assimilation techniques. This lets players create violent mutant versions of the former stars to unleash in the ring.

The best way to play a wrestling game (or any fighting game for that matter) is with some friends; human opponents are always going to provide more of a challenge than an AI-controlled enemy, plus it's just fun to kick the stuffing out of your mates. Showdown: Legends of Wrestling has a number of worthy multiplayer options and while it seems doubtful that will topple titles like Smackdown and Def Jam Vendetta, this is another rock solid wrestling title from Acclaim.



RELEASED THIS MONTH



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

XBOX ■ THQ

This third person action title from THQ was originally commissioned by the U.S Army as a training simulator for future squad leaders. With bullets flying around your ears Full Spectrum Warrior offers a realistic and fascinating insight into the often unsentimental world of a grunt.



SPIDER-MAN 2

PS2/XBOX/CUBE ■ ACTIVISION

Spider-Man 2 is free of the linear structure that marred the original. As Spidey you patrol Manhattan Island battling the deadly Doctor Octopus. But this isn't just a superhero show-down; Manhattan has a crime rate, there are many small-time thugs for Spidey to deal with.



GRAN TURISMO 4: PROLOGUE

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ SCEI

Having trouble waiting for the final version? Gran Turismo 4: Prologue is a 'preview' that gives race fans a tantalizing taste of the long-awaited Gran Turismo 4. There are a multitude of cars to choose from and five tracks, including New York, the Fuji Speedway, and the Grand Canyon (dirt).



HARRY POTTER & THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

PS2/XBOX/PC/GBA ■ EA GAMES

EA's Harry Potter franchise has already sold more than 20 million copies worldwide. And it's clear that they've poured a lot of money into Prisoner of Azkaban's production. Like the film, the game is a step up from what we've seen in the past, and should please Potter fans.



READ DEAD REVOLVER

PS2/XBOX ■ ROCKSTAR GAMES

Divided into 21 chapters, Red Dead Revolver plays out as a series of distinct and varied action set-pieces. The game's controls and visuals could have used some extra polish but it's hard to not appreciate its finer moments, and would-be gunslingers will be well served by the plentiful extras and multiplayer modes.



CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ UBISOFT

Champions of Norrath arrives on the PS2 with arguably the best graphics seen for this type of game. Richly vibrant colours and clever use of lighting give the large environments a remarkable luminous quality. Likewise the story molding movie sequences rarely fail to deliver a visual treat.



MARIO GOLF ADVANCED TOUR

GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ NINTENDO

The game looks extraordinary, with the courses rendered in stunning 3D. Advance Tour also has certain RPG elements in addition to the golf. You will have to gather vital golf data from the various characters you meet. There's also a multiplayer mode that allows for up to four players to meet up and hit the links.



RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

XBOX ■ MICROSOFT

It has been a couple of years since the original. Now Live enabled and supported by breathtaking graphics, the sequel has been worth the wait. The game features more than 90 tracks and various styles of racing, but RalliSport is not about the big name drivers. Instead it's just you, the car and the road ahead.



MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3

PS2/XBOX ■ CODEMASTERS

MTV Music Generator 3 is the latest addition to the MTV Music Generator series. The game makes original music compilation and detailed remixing simple with an intuitive system capable of delivering a finished track with quality sound results. Remix some of the biggest artists today.



FREELANCER

PC ■ MICROSOFT

Microsoft's top notch space combat classic is being released as a budget title this month. Freelancer lets you sharpen up your flight skills in this 3D title where you play a mercenary for hire. You can customise and upgrade your craft as you go; the tough part is not to get killed along the way.



JOAN OF ARC

PC ■ QVS

You control Joan as she progresses onward in her fight against the English. The fighting style looks and feels a bit like Dynasty Warriors in that you have to fight off hordes of English foot soldiers, archers, and knights using quick but weak swings of your sword.



PAINKILLER

PC ■ QVS

Painkiller takes place over five chapters, each housing four to six levels, with more unlocked if you play on a higher difficulty setting. While the gameplay is kept quite simple, it rarely feels boring or repetitive, which is testament the excellent level and art design.

COMPETITIONS



DOOM 3

Softprint and Activision have kindly given us 3 copies of this landmark title to give away. If you're aged 16 or over, just answer this to be in the draw!

In what year was the original Doom released?

- a) 1993
- b) 1977
- c) 1984

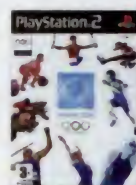


DRIV3R

Atari has provided us with 2 copies of DRIV3R to give away, each comes with a coffee mug and a t-shirt! Just answer correctly & go in the draw!

What was the last title in the Driver series called?

- a) The Driver Strikes Back
- b) Driver 2
- c) Driving Miss Daisy



ATHENS 2004

We have 3 copies of Sony's Athens 2004 so you can brush up on your knowledge before this year's Olympics. Answer this and go in the draw to win!

Where were the very first Olympic games held?

- a) Rome
- b) Athens
- c) London



NINTENDO PACK

Nintendo have given us a copy of 1080 Snowboarding & Pokemon Colosseum to give away. Just answer the following question to be in the draw to win!

Which Nintendo system featured the original 1080 Snowboarding?

- a) Game Boy
- b) Super NES
- c) N64

HOW TO ENTER

Write the correct answer, your name and contact details on the back of the envelope. All correct entries immediately go into the draw to win. This month's prize winners will be drawn and notified August 10, 2004.

Send to: Gamefreaks Competition, PO Box 68-211, Newton, Auckland or e-mail: competitions@tenthplanet.co.nz (Maximum 3 entries per e-mail address)

Published by the creators of EverQuest® and developed by the team behind Baldur's Gate™, Dark Alliance™, Champions of Norrath™ is an Action RPG like none other on the PlayStation 2. Create your own champion, each with unique powers, appearances and skills. Experience an epic adventure filled with powerful action and ominous intrigue.

Battle vicious monsters where your mastery of weaponry and spells is the only thing between you and supreme evil.

CHAMPIONS NORRATH

REALMS of EVERQUEST

PlayStation 2



Available now!

UBISOFT

THIS TIME IT'S SERIOUS.
DEADLY SERIOUS.

NINJA GAIDEN

TECMO

ONLY ON
XBOX

RESTRICTED
16

The world's most deadly Ninja assassin is on a new quest and this time it's personal. After the evil Vigoor Empire massacres his clan, Ryu Hayabasu sets out for revenge in an action-packed adventure where the lines between good and evil are not easy to decipher.

Using lethal weapons and skill only a true Ninja could possess, you must unleash the full fury of the betrayed Ryu Hayabasu to destroy your opponents, defeating the Holy Emperor and reclaiming the magical sword, 'Ryuken.'

And remember, a Ninja's vengeance runs not only through his blood, but through his soul.

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